

Article by **Katie Hewitt**



© RVP-Photography.com

# Amy Stross

## – permaculture designer & writer

For full immersion in the English language, the text is kept simple and technical vocabulary is explained and not translated.

Amy Stross, from Cincinnati, Ohio, started micro-farming\* her front garden after taking stock of her life\* and deciding to take a career break\* from her job as a teacher, which she wasn't enjoying.

Once summer arrived, Amy packed away her pens and paper and picked up a trowel\* and got her hands muddy instead! With a passion for the outdoors and gardens, she started the transformation of her front yard that summer. She writes on her website, "In an American-as-apple-pie, 1950s-era neighborhood, my yard was surely never meant to be anything more than lawn. This is where I started growing my own food."

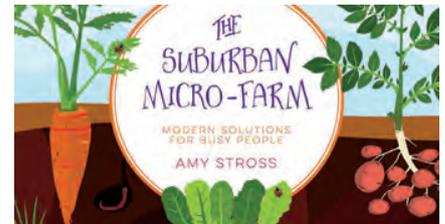
Amy is now a successful blogger and author of *THE SUBURBAN MICRO-FARM: MODERN SOLUTIONS FOR BUSY PEOPLE*, where she shares her passion and 'tips for applying permaculture design to small-scale residential spaces'. Her book is

\*Definition in the 'Vocabulary' box.

packed with tips, designs and ideas which give inspiration to transform your back garden, a lawn, a community area or even a school yard into an area that increases biodiversity\* and works with nature\*. Nowadays, half of America's population lives in suburbs, and increasingly people are interested in dedicating part of the garden to growing some food for the household. A micro-farm can be as simple as that!



© TenthAcreFarm.com



### How did Amy get into permaculture?

After leaving her job as a teacher, Amy took a couple of part-time jobs in gardening to develop skills and gather experience. Her jobs as a landscape gardener and as a community farm manager developed her knowledge of how to choose the right plants for the soil, how to encourage nature, and also how to make land productive as a provider of food to support people. Whilst working, she became a certified permaculture specialist, a role based on a philosophy focused on how humans can live sustainably and minimize their environmental impact.

Amy says that permaculture "helped synergize\*" her thoughts and experiences on farming and gardening, and gave her a methodology\* to support her way of working. With permaculture, she could focus on growing food efficiently whilst being in tune with nature\*.



© Ken Strigler Photography.com

The original Tenth Acre Farm's edible front yard

“ Permaculture is a philosophy that places nature at the centre of living, values all people, and recognizes the importance of looking after the earth. ”



© TenthAcreFarm.com

## From small seeds grow great things

With her growing interest in permaculture, she initially started sowing a few vegetables in with the plant borders and growing some potatoes in pots in her small suburban garden. Then, as her confidence grew, she took a broader approach and replaced the ornamental garden shrubs with fruit yielding trees and focused more fully on utilizing all areas for cultivating edible plants. With only a tenth of an acre to play with, Amy was inventive and even put raised planters on the drive to increase the growing area. As she learnt more and more, she started a website to share her knowledge. Now, TenthAcreFarm.com holds bags of advice and wisdom for gardeners on how to successfully garden a small residential suburban site.

## What is permaculture?

Permaculture was pioneered in the mid-1970s by Australians Bill Mollison and David Holmgren, who were concerned with the devastating impact of agriculture on nature. Permaculture focuses on meeting human needs through working sustainably with nature, and integrates ecological design with environmental design. It was an underground movement\* with a grassroots following\* but has more recently entered the mainstream.

Permaculture involves observing and watching nature, taking time to notice



© TenthAcreFarm.com

the world around us, and designing using nature's principles for growing. The values of permaculture are 'Earth Care, People Care & Fair Share'. Much more than gardening techniques, permaculture is a philosophy that places nature at the centre of living, values all people, and recognizes the importance of looking after the earth. Permaculture groups exist all over the world and connect by using the Internet to share wisdom and advice. ■



© TenthAcreFarm.com

## Vocabulary

**to micro-farm:** to run a small-scale farm, often in a residential or an urban area

**to take stock of your life:** to look at and assess where you are in life

**to take a career break:** to take time off work

**a trowel:** a small hand tool (spade) for gardening

**biodiversity:** all living things on earth: plants, animals, humans, bacteria, etc

**works with nature/in tune with nature:** in harmony with nature

**to synergize:** to combine more than one factor in order to achieve a better result

**a methodology:** a framework for a study or an approach to doing something

**raised planters:** large wooden boxes for plants

**an underground movement:** a campaign that is not in the public eye or doesn't conform to mainstream views

**grassroots following:** public support that is bottom-up rather than coming from government agendas